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Document Number: 1979BUENOS00897

UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 1  
Channel: n/a

Case Number: 200000044

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 00897 020636Z  
ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00  
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03  
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O R 311854Z JAN 79  
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9315  
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(☒) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ( ) In Part (☒) In Full

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[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 0897

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDING EO, TAGS AND SUBJECT)

E.O. 12065: GDS 1/30/85 (HALLMAN, WILLIAM H.) OR-P  
TAGS: PGOV PINT SHUM MORG AR  
SUBJ: (U) KEY CHANGES IN THE ARMY: POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

1. (ENTIRE TEXT).

2. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY. THE VIDELA-VIOLA TEAM COMES OUT AHEAD IN THE NEW ARMY ASSIGNMENTS THAT WERE ANNOUNCED LATE FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, AND BEGAN TO TAKE PLACE (NOTABLE IN SUAREZ MASON'S TAKING OVER AS CHIEF OF STAFF) ON MONDAY TWENTY NINE. IT LOOKS TO US THAT THE PRESENT REGIME HAS RENOVATED ITS CHARTER -- BOTH IN TERMS OF ITS FUTURE AND ITS PRESENT SPAN OF CONTROL. THOSE CHANGES WE BELIEVE ESPECIALLY PERTINENT TO THE PROCESS OF MILITARY POLITICS ARE THE FOLLOWING: END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

3. MAJOR GENERAL GUILLERMO SUAREZ MASON BECOMES ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF. THE TOUGH FIRST CORPS COMMANDER, WHOM

PAGE 02 BUENOS 00897 020636Z

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 1

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Case Number: 200000044

WE BELIEVE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ACTIVITIES ON THE REPRESSION FRONT THAT LED TO SCORES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS MOVES TO A POSITION OF PRESTIGE AND ALIGNS HIMSELF TO REPLACE VIOLA AS ARMY COMMANDER. HIS "HEIR APPARENT" JOB ALSO CONFERS A MEASURE OF CONTROL OVER WHEN HIS ARMY BOSS MIGHT HAVE TO MOVE ON -- IE HIS OPINION COUNTS HEAVILY IN THE TOP BRASS HAT CONSENSUS THAT BESTOWS OR WITHDRAWS "CONFIDENCE" IN VIOLA. BUT IN LEAVING FIRST CORPS COMMAND HE TAKES HIMSELF FROM DIRECT COMMAND OF TROOPS AND AWAY FROM A KIND OF MILITARY FIEF. SUAREZ MASON'S POSITION AS AN OUTSPOKEN RIVAL OF VIOLA WHO BELIEVES SHE CAN DO IT BETTER" (AND HAS SUPPORT FOR THESE AMBITIONS IN MILITARY CIRCLES) APPEARS THEN TEMPORARILY DIMINISHED BOTH BY CO-OPTION AND BY POWER AMPUTATION.

4. BRIGADIER GENERAL TOMAS LIENDO, FORMER MINISTER OF LABOR, BECOMES SUAREZ MASON'S SECOND IN COMMAND. LIENDO IS RESPECTED FOR HIS HANDLING OF THE LABOR PORTFOLIO AND IS A LOYALIST -- MEANING WE THINK HE WILL HOLD FIRM WITH THE EXISTING VIOLA-VIDELA LEADERSHIP.

5. MAJOR GENERAL LEOPOLDO FORTUNATO GALTIERI REPLACES SUAREZ MASON AT FIRST CORPS. HE COMES TO THIS JOB FROM SECOND CORPS COMMAND, AND WE NOTE THAT IN THAT GEOGRAPHICAL AREA EARLY PROGRESS WAS MADE IN GETTING PEN PRISONERS TRIED, SENTENCED, PROCESSED. IF HE CAN BRING TO THE FIRST CORPS DISTRICT SOMETHING OF THE JUDGEMENT HE SHOWED WHILE IN ROSARIO THEN WE BELIEVE THERE IS REASON FOR ENCOURAGEMENT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS FRONT. HE TOO WILL PROBABLY LOOK TOWARD VIDELA'S AND VIOLA'S LEADERSHIP -- A PROFESSIONAL WHOSE INVOLVEMENT IN MILITARY POLITICS HAS NOT BEEN NOTABLE.

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PAGE 03 BUENOS 00897 020636Z

6. BRIGADIER GENERAL JOSE ROGELIO VILLARREAL BECOMES DEPUTY FIRST CORPS COMMANDER. UNTIL EARLY DECEMBER SECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENCY, VILLARREAL PRESUMABLY BRINGS TO HIS NEW JOB THE LOYALTY TO VIDELA AND VIOLA THAT SAW THEM THROUGH THE PAST FEW YEARS.

7. AT "MILITARY INSTITUTES," REPLACING HARDLINE

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 2

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: n/a  
Document Number: 1979BUENOS00897

UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 3  
Channel: n/a

Case Number: 200000044

MAJOR GENERAL SANTIAGO OMAR RIVEROS, WHOSE ENMITY FOR VIOLA AND WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN ACTS APPARENTLY INTENDED TO EMBARRASS BOTH VIDELA AND VIOLA WAS WIDELY DISCUSSED, IS MAJOR GENERAL JOSE MONTES -- WHO HAD BEEN ACTING TEMPORARILY AS VIOLA'S ARMY CHIEF SINCE VIOLA HIMSELF CAME TO REPLACE VIDELA. DESPITE ITS TAME SOUNT "INSTITUCIONES MILITARES" IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT CONFERS CONTROL OVER THE ARMY'S ENORMOUS "CAMPO DE MAYO" BASE JUST OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL. RIVERO'S DEPARTURE FOR THE INTER-AMERICAN DEFENSE BOARD IN WASHINGTON CLEARLY REMOVES AN ELEMENT OF ANTI-VIDELA/VIOLA FRICTION. AGAIN, VIOLA SCORES.

8. MAJOR GENERAL ANTONIO DOMINGO BUSSI, THE NEW GENDARMERIE CHIEF REPLACING RETIRING GENERAL SANTIAGO, IS A VIOLA MAN ALSO. A BRIGHT, DEDICATED PROFESSIONAL -- KNOWN FOR HIS ANTI-GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES IN TUCUMAN -- HIS ASSIGNMENT TO THE GENDARMERI SIDELINES IS PUZZLING. ONCE AGAIN THOUGH HE DOES COMMAND TROOPS -- UP ONE FROM HIS RELATIVELY POWERLESS POSITION AS RIVEROS' SECOND AT "MINITARY INSTITUTES."

9. SIMILARLY MAJOR GENERAL ADOLFO JAUREGUI'S REPLACING GALTIERI AS SECOND CORPOS COMMANDER APPEARS TO PUT A "VIOLA MAN" IN A LEADING COMMAND POSITION.

10. MORE ON THE NEUTRAL SIDE WERE RECONFIRMATION  
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PAGE 04 BUENOS 00897 020636Z

OF MAJOR GENERAL LUCIANO B. MENENDEZ AND JOSE ANTONIO VAQUERO AS THIRD AND FIFTH CORPOS COMMANDERS -- SUPPOSEDLY BECAUSE OF THE NEED OF THEIR STAYING PUT ON THE CHILEAN FRONTIER. ON THE OTHER HAND, FAILURE TO APPOINT MENENDEZ TO THE PRESTIGIOUS FIRST CORPOSCOMMAND IS TAKEN BY SOME AS A CALCULATED AFFRONT BY VIOLA.

11. BRIGADIER GENERAL JUAN BAUTISTA SASSIAIN (THE FINA "N" CARRIES A "TILDE") REPLACES OJEDA AS CHIEF OF NATIONAL POLICE. SASSIAIN BRINGS A TOUGH, CRUEL REPUTATION TO THIS AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S REPRESSIVE EFFORTS. IF THERE IS AN OMINOUS APPOINTMENT, THIS IS IT. SASSIAIN

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 3

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: n/a  
Document Number: 1979BUENOS00897

UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 4  
Channel: n/a

Case Number: 200000044

WAS FORMERLY COMMANDER OF THE TENTH INFANTRY  
BRIGADE AND, AS COMMANDER ALSO OF SECURITY SUBZONE ELEVEN  
HE REPORTEDLY BECAME AN "EXPERT"  
IN COUNTERSUBVERSION. WE DO NOT KNOW FOR SURE HOW  
HE STANDS IN TERMS OF LOYALTIES THOUGH BY ONE REPORT  
HE IS A "VIOLA MAN".

12. OTHER CHANGES IN THE ARMY, BEING REPORTED IN  
OTHER CHANNELS, LOOK AT THIS POINT TO US EITHER  
POLITICALLY NEUTRAL OR INSCRUTABLE -- ALTHOUGH, AGAIN,  
THERE MAY BE AN EDGE TOWARD THE VIDELA-VIOLA TEAM.  
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Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 4

UNCLASSIFIED